

# National Archives at College Park



8601 Adelphi Road College Park, Maryland 20740-6001

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MEMORANDUM TO AGENCY RECORDS OFFICERS AND INFORMATION RESOURCE MANAGERS: Bimonthly Records and Information Discussion Group (BRIDG) Meeting on April 12, 2000.

The Modern Records Programs of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) will host a BRIDG meeting on April 12, 2000, from 10:00 a.m. to noon, in the National Archives Building Theater, 7<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC.

A representative of the Fast Track Team, Mary Rawlings-Milton of the Office of Thrift Supervision, will discuss the new Fast Track product. The product will help records and information managers sell electronic recordkeeping (ERK) systems and electronic records management (ERM) to upper management.

NARA is interested in learning the views of the federal records and information management community regarding this product. It consists of 3 sections: a User Guide that can be used with either a long PowerPoint presentation or a short PowerPoint presentation. In addition to posting it to the Fast Track web site at <http://www.nara.gov/records/fasttrak/ftprod.html>, when it is ready, we will also send copies of the three files to anyone who requests them via [records.mgt@arch2.nara.gov](mailto:records.mgt@arch2.nara.gov).

To reserve a place for the BRIDG meeting, please provide your name, telephone number, and number of attendees to Mary Kay Schmidt on 301-713-7110, extension 255, (or e-mail [mary.schmidt@arch2.nara.gov](mailto:mary.schmidt@arch2.nara.gov)), no later than April 10, 2000.

Attached is the summary from the February 22, 2000 BRIDG meeting concerning the NARA Records Center Program. The summary is also available on the Internet at <http://www.nara.gov/records/bridg.html>. As you may recall from the last BRIDG meeting, Records Center Program staff will host a Records Center Forum from 9:00 to 9:45 AM before the April 12 BRIDG meeting to discuss records center issues and answer questions.

**MICHAEL L. MILLER**

*Director*

*Modern Records Programs*

## **Bimonthly Records and Information Discussion Group (BRIDG)**

*10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., February 22, 2000*

**Room 105, National Archives Building, Washington, DC**

### **TOPIC: "What's the Buzz? - Presenting the NARA Records Center Program."**

About 55 people attended the February 22, 2000, BRIDG meeting to learn more about the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) Records Center Program as a reimbursable enterprise. Presentations by the Program staff highlighted the Records Center Program's current status and its future directions. Michael L. Miller, Director of Modern Records Programs, opened the meeting and introduced the speakers.

The Records Center Program speakers were David Weinberg (Program Manager), Jay Trainer (Financial Analyst), Susan Donius (Management Analyst for Customer Service), Scott Levins (Management Analyst for Space and Facilities), and Bill Craig (Atlanta Records Center).

#### **Introduction – Mike Miller, Modern Records Programs**

The Washington National Records Center (WNRC), which operates the same way as the regional records centers, is part of Modern Records Programs. Alan Kramer recently assumed leadership of the WNRC from Chip Stovel, who was the WNRC's director for the past 15 years.

In the future, agencies will have a choice of where to store their records. NARA's appraisal staff will provide the same level of services to our customers, no matter where they choose to store their records.

#### **David Weinberg – Records Center Program**

The goal of the Records Center Program is to provide superior and cost-effective storage services throughout the United States. In October 1999, the Records Center Revolving Fund Law (Public Law 106-58) was passed to support current and future needs for storing government records. As part of NARA, the Records Center Program features an integrated approach to managing records through a self-supporting system. The Records Center Program provides an opportunity to create change, provide support, and meet the needs of NARA's customers.

Weinberg explained his plans for moving forward by utilizing the talents of his staff and account representatives. First, he introduced his staff who deal with facilities, administrative, and customer service issues.

- Scott Levins, management analyst for Facilities
- Jay Trainer, financial analyst for Administrative Issues
- Susan Donius, Customer Relations and Records Service Initiatives

Weinberg also introduced the Records Center Program's account representatives, who work directly with the agencies. Agencies may contact them with pricing questions, billing questions or requests for such reimbursable special projects as "pack and hauls."

- Mildred Simmons (Energy, Health and Human Services, Transportation, NARA, Office of Personnel Management, Postal Service)
- Colleen Snyder (Commerce, Treasury (including Internal Revenue Service), Justice (including Immigration and Naturalization Service), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Social Security Administration)
- Angela Tillery (Agriculture, Education, Labor, Interior, Environmental Protection Agency, General Services Administration)
- Sandra Wayman (Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Executive Office of the President, Records of the Judicial Branch, Records of the Legislative Branch, DC Government, State, all other independent agencies)

Weinberg also recognized Alan Kramer in his role as the WNRC's new director. Next, he spoke about some of NARA's efforts to improve service to agencies. For example, one initiative emphasizes meetings and communications with every agency. All NARA Records Center Program staff participated in the Enlightened Leadership class, which recognizes the importance of customer service and stresses that every organizational employee has a role in promoting good customer relations with agencies.

### **Scott Levins – Space and Facilities**

NARA's strategy for managing its records center facilities has two components: (1) To reduce our overall costs and pass the reductions on to our customers and (2) To improve the quality of the space in which we store our customers' records.

One early cost reduction strategy was to renegotiate rent rates with GSA. Converting to a fully-reimbursable program has increased our leverage in this area. Since the reimbursable program was announced, we have achieved \$4.2 million in annual rent savings due to renegotiated rates. The initial cost estimates sent to customer agencies in May 1998, estimated storage charges to be \$2.08 per cubic foot. The FY 2000 storage rate actually turned out to be much lower, at only \$1.96 per cubic foot. This reduction was due primarily to savings achieved by renegotiating our rent rates.

Another strategy for reducing storage costs involves creative, new shelving configurations. Since the reimbursable program was announced, we hired an engineering firm to design a new shelving configuration that runs 29 shelves high. The standard shelving configuration currently employed in most of our records centers is only 14 shelves high. Thus, the new shelving configuration would enable us to double our capacity without acquiring additional floor space. A fire test was conducted on the new configuration on December 12, 1999. The criterion for success was "not more than 300 cubic feet of records destroyed by fire." The estimated loss due

to fire was only 40 cubic feet, so the test was declared a success. The new shelving configuration will first be employed in Palmetto, GA, future home of the Atlanta Federal Records Center, and will also be considered for any other expansion activities in the system.

A third strategy for reducing storage costs involves turning back costly annex space. For example, records stored in annex space in the DC area are being shipped to our Dayton, Ohio, facility, which has excess capacity. When the project is completed, the annex space in the DC area will be turned back, saving NARA \$0.5 million per year in rent costs. Annexes in Philadelphia and Kansas City will be considered next.

Next, Levins discussed facilities standards. NARA records centers are in compliance with the current regulations. NARA will have to make some modifications to the facilities over the next nine years to meet requirements that take effect in October 2009. Contracted engineers are currently evaluating the existing buildings to determine the work that needs to be done and to establish a plan for its accomplishment. Their plan is due in September 2000.

### **Jay Trainer – Financial Analyst**

Jay Trainer stated that the appropriated environment is very different from the reimbursable environment. He noted that he had spoken with many agency personnel in various meetings and thanked them for their useful feedback.

A year ago, NARA hired Price-Waterhouse-Coopers to review existing and establish new information technology systems that shape the revolving fund process. They examined staff expectations of the revolving fund and helped design systems that NARA needs for records center operations.

The new systems helped NARA comply with Public Law 106-58, which allows NARA to bill all customers through GSA's OPAC systems. Agencies should direct all questions on records center storage and services to NARA through the Records Center Program account representatives. Storage and services are the only costs to agencies, unless they have special projects over and above the baseline services.

Every effort is being made to enhance the NARS-5, CIPS, and internal tracking systems to provide the Records Center Program staff with what they need to assist customers. Currently, the limitations of these systems are being stretched by using existing systems for purposes other than what they were intended to do. There is a big push to develop systems with capabilities required by agencies to conduct their business and track the status of their records.

### **Susan Donius – Customer Relations and Records Service Initiatives**

The Records Center Program staff is committed to meet and exceed customer service standards. In FY 1999, reference requests were answered eighty percent of the time within 24 hours. The nationwide goal is ninety percent. Early in FY 2000, 20 additional staff members were added at the Washington National Records Center to enhance customer service. All performance levels are monitored to ensure that agencies receive the services for which they pay. NARA records

centers also assist agencies with their file systems and tailor other reimburseable special projects according to specific agency needs. Examples of special projects include

- Bar-coding and consolidating agency records
- Supporting active files and records programs by picking up active files, transporting them for storage, and doing data entry on the latest actions
- Consolidating all of an agency's records at Lee's Summit to improve the customer agency's business efficiency
- Packing and hauling records and preparing SF-135 paperwork

The Records Center Program wants to work with its customer agencies to identify partnerships in which NARA can support agencies with their records storage and service needs.

### **Bill Craig – CIPS Demonstration**

Bill Craig conducted an on-line demonstration of the CIPS system. The system is in the process of being web-enabled. David Weinberg explained that the new system would allow those records officers without modem access to use the CIPS system through the web. The CIPS demo is just the first step in the development of a CIPS web interface. Planning continues for future versions of an interface that will allow NARA to communicate with agencies about many other services via the web.

The new TARGET system, which will replace CIPS in the future, is being designed to meet agencies' needs and work for the long term. It will replace NARS-5 and maintain data on records received and stored in the records center system. In addition to allowing agencies to access information about their records via the Internet, TARGET will also

- Eliminate the requirement for paper forms
- Eliminate the need to keep request logs by allowing agencies to conduct keyword searches on previous requests
- Allow the development of folder labels and bar coded-box labels when records are created

### **David Weinberg – Summary**

Increased efficiency in the Records Center Program will provide greater cost-effectiveness for agencies. Communications initiatives are also important. Within the year, NARA plans to launch newsletters and other communication vehicles to keep agencies informed about the Records Center Program's progress.

The Records Center Program staff plans to open a dialogue with agencies in the future. They envision holding a regular 45-minute briefing before each BRIDG meeting to provide an open forum for questions about the reimbursable program.

### **Questions and Answers**

Following the presentations on the Records Center Program, records officers asked questions and offered the following comments.

**Question:** Are there any plans to add reporting tools to CIPS or NARS-5? Reporting tools and printing capabilities would be beneficial to agency records officers.

**Answer:** The current system has limited reporting capabilities. The TARGET system will include the capability to custom-tailor reports to meet agencies' needs and have a range of template reports.

**Question:** Is NARA planning a separate interface for NARS-5?

**Answer:** NARS-5 will migrate to the new system.

**Question:** Will the new system take care of billing?

**Answer:** Agencies are charged for storage and for services – what is performed and how much is required. Account representatives can get copies of invoices for agencies if there are questions or if it is data that NARA is already capturing elsewhere. Contact the account representatives for further information.

**Question:** Costs for FY 2001 are needed now. What figures should we use?

**Answer:** Costs for FY 2001 have not been validated yet. NARA will let customers know when prices are set. For now, agencies should use current fiscal year fees for planning purposes. Prices may vary slightly, depending on the amount of an agency's reference requests.

**Question:** For months, the Department of Labor has been working with the Department of Justice concerning the preservation of tobacco-related records. Recently the Department of Labor received a letter from NARA stating that it had imposed a freeze on the destruction of all records of the Department of Labor. Why did NARA take this action? The Department of Labor has already worked with the Department of Justice on this issue and does not need any of its records in NARA's records centers frozen as a result of tobacco litigation.

**Answer:** NARA's General Counsel received a list of 27 Federal agencies, which were identified by defendants as potentially having records that may be needed for their defense. Many of the agencies on the list were identified at the department level, so the list included most of the Federal Government. The Department of Labor was included on this list. The Department of Justice indicated that they had already written to each agency and asked that they take the necessary steps to preserve records that are related to tobacco, including records that may have

been retired to NARA's Federal Records Center system. As a precaution, because NARA had not heard from most agencies on the list provided by the Department of Justice, it immediately halted the disposal of all records. Michael Kurtz, Assistant Archivist for Records Services – Washington, DC, wrote to the agencies to inform them of this action and to ask them to respond as to what records needed to remain frozen. Upon receiving this letter from NARA, the Department of Labor asked that none of its records be retained beyond their scheduled disposal date as a result of this litigation. We are resuming disposal activity for records that our customers have indicated are not needed for tobacco litigation.

**Comment:** The Department of Labor was told that the freeze would last for a year.

**Question by NARA:** Many attendees indicated that they had not yet heard of this litigation. How many records officers have seen the letter issued by NARA concerning this freeze?

**Answer:** A number of records officers reported that they had not seen the letter. Someone suggested that the letter be posted on NARA's web site.

**Question:** Will the Department of Justice pay for charges incurred by agencies because of this freeze?

**Answer:** The Department of Justice has not made a commitment to pay for the additional costs. The records are being retained beyond their scheduled disposition date due to a court order, not necessarily at the request of the Department of Justice. Complying with court orders is typically the responsibility of each agency.

**Question:** Where is NARA/the Federal Government in terms of 100 percent automation and electronic storage?

**Answer:** Paper records are here to stay for the foreseeable future. For information on electronic recordkeeping initiatives, visit the Fast Track page on the NARA web site at <http://www.nara.gov/records/fasttrak/fthome.html>. NARA is looking for agencies that want to move toward electronic recordkeeping and will dialog with them about the issues.

**Question:** Will NARA help agencies address the declassification of 25-year-old documents as required under Executive Order 12958?

**Answer:** Many agencies are working with NARA to declassify their records. For further information, contact Jeanne Schauble at 301-713-7144 x226 or via e-mail at [jeanne.schauble@arch2.nara.gov](mailto:jeanne.schauble@arch2.nara.gov).

**Question:** Is Targeted Assistance part of the reimbursable program?

**Answer:** Targeted Assistance is separate from the Records Center reimbursable program.

**Wrap-Up – Mike Miller**

Opportunities for agencies to comment on proposed regulation changes are available on the NARA web site at <http://www.nara.gov/nara/pubcom.html>.

- Proposed changes in declassification regulations have been published in the *Federal Register* at <http://www.nara.gov/nara/1260pro.html>.
- Proposed changes in regulations on rewinding computer tapes have been published in the *Federal Register* at <http://www.nara.gov/nara/1234pro.html>. Nancy Allard (NARA) clarified that there has never been a requirement for rewinding temporary computer tapes. The proposed regulation eliminates the requirement for rewinding permanent and unscheduled tapes.

Agencies that still have SF 115s and SF 258s from the WNRC Project should return them to NARA as soon as possible. Agencies will save money on storage costs and help NARA maintain its accessioning and processing schedules.

Agencies should nominate themselves and other agencies for the Best Practices awards, which will be given at the RACO conference on May 23, 2000. Further information is available on the NARA web site at <http://www.nara.gov/records/racofl.html>. The nomination form is posted at <http://www.nara.gov/records/racobp.html>, and all nominations are due by April 1, 2000.

The Records Center Program staff will present progress updates at the conference and will conduct web interface demonstrations in the exhibit hall.

NARA welcomes agency input and feedback. Contact NARA's records management staff at [records.mgt@arch2.nara.gov](mailto:records.mgt@arch2.nara.gov).